

A Strange and Wonderful
RELATION
OF THE
OLD WOMAN

Who was drowned at
RATCLIFF-HIGHWAY,
A Fortnight ago.

To which is added,

The OLD WOMAN's DREAM
a little after her Death.



Printed for the Bookfellers.

THE OLD WOMAN

Ratcliff-Highway.



I Shall not need tell you how the Woman happened to be drowned at Ratcliff Highway nor how I went to enquire for her at Sir John Vang's house, or of the wonderful, strange, and uncommon sights I saw there:

But I am to let you know that after the Old Woman had made her will, and given me all she had, I must own I long to be fingering it.—But I living as far as Dog



and Bitch Lane, Wind-mill street, and the
as far as Ratchiff-Highway I could not hear
from her every day, no, nor every year
neither.

So that hearing no tidings of her in a mat-
ter of fourteen years and seven odd days I
resolved to make a voyage to see whether she
was dead or not.



As I went through the Old Exchange
just by Billingsgate there I saw three fish-
wives a scolding and fighting, and pulling
one another's shoes off their heads, till they
hung about their legs. I wondered much to
see such hurly burly; but I with much ado
got them parted, and asked them both what
was the matter with one of them — So she
told me they called her five whores, and she
was but three, and that I was even five rogues

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for taking her part. When I perceived she
should not go distracted, I gave them all the
best good language that ever I saw master
of notwithstanding they all fell over me and
buffeted me with their peryiwigs, that if the
boat had not sunk under us, we should cer-
tainly all have been drowned.



Well away I walked softly as fast as ever
I could run until the Tower came to me.

When I came there the corporal of the
Tower had a thimble full of gunpowder and
put three pistol bullets into one of the biggest
cannons, and was just going to batter down
Westminster Abbey.

So I thought I would see that trick before I went any farther. So I went and stood beside him, to see what he did not intend to do.

As soon as he was ready he brought a matter of a bushel of burning charcoal in a little wooden porringer and set that under the gun until he made it so hot that the fired the bullets and away flew the powder and missed Westminster Abbey but hit Lashly's Folly which stood upon the Thames and drove it up the river as far as Gravesend.



The noise of the gun cheared my spirits and put me into a quaking fever, so that I swooned. But when I came to myself again, I came down to Ratcliff Highway to visit the Old Woman; when I came there, I found

her at breakfast, just about sun-setting with
a very good parsnip custard stewed with
heartchookas and a dozen red herrings fried
up with mutton flakes.



As soon as she saw me, she asked me where
I had been these many days - and told me she
never remembered me - for I had been in her
mind ever since she saw me last.

I told her I had been praying for her ill fare,
she thanked me for my devotion and bid
me sit down and drink up some of her vic-
tuals, which pleased me very ill; for I had
eat nothing in twenty hours before.



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Whilst we were at dinner, smoaking a pipe
of tobacco, over a cup of peaseporridge
she told me, that she found by the resti-
tution of her body, that she could not live
for ever. And therefore she intended before
her aforesaid death to take a journey into
Kent to see a sister of her's who lived at
Brentford in Middlesex, and that I should go
along to hear her company.

I told her I should be always ready to do any thing that would displease her. So she made too much haste to make her self ready, for as she was going down into her chamber to put a dirty one, it did so chance that her foot slipped, and she tumbled up stairs and did happily break her neck.



When I heard the noise, I went to see what was the matter. When I came to her, I perceived by her groaning that she had knocked out her fore teeth just behind — so I thought it was not any time to stand still for fear she should catch cold, but away ran I as fast as my hands would carry me, to Westminster Hall, amongst the lawyers, where I

got several surgeons and five directors to go and see her wounds.

As I was coming back again just about dinner time, the constable and Watch standing with their lanterns and their candles at noon day, he took me, and clapped me up in Newgate, for walking the streets so late in the day time. And told him I had been making him a cuckold, at the time that he had been on the watch.



I could not tell how to help myself: but all my care was, lest the "poor old woman" should cry her eyes out, because I made so much haste.

However I thought how to fit them for when they were all fast asleep, dancing about the gallery. I very simply stole the

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key out of the prisoners pocket and so opening the gate set out all the jailors.

So away they all run being glad they were escaped with their lives unhang'd: and away I run through the hedge and ditch, over all the streets, till I came to Ratchiff Highway.



But yet I made such haste that I lost the shoes of my head, and the hat of my feet.

When I came there I found the old woman putting on her best boots and spurs, and preparing for her journey :

Then I asked her if she had got any hurt with her fall? She said she had rubbed a little skin off the inside of one of her thighs, which she shewed me, and I was glad it was no better.



But after we had considered about our journey it was resolved she should take shipping and go by land, and that I should take Hackney Coach, and so go by water, and then we should go together for company.

So we went into Moorfields, and got both upon one horse, and away we rid but by good fortune my horse was a vast deal

worse than her's. So I over rid her about
three or four miles.



When we came almost unto Paner Church,
she desired me to sing her a merry tale.
I told her that I could not sing her a merry
tale but I would tell her a pretty, great,
little, fine, long song, to pass the time,
I said this ditty,



Tune. Hi ho, hunt about.

O Betty be wary,
For fear you miscarry,
A young man hath parts to allure;
He'll first fill your belly
And then he'll tell you,
And made not your bargain secure,
Ye Anaid that is young
His suiters ding dung
And many her love will desire;
When as an old woman
Is courted by no man
And overworn jade will soon tire.

When I had made an end of my singing,
she told me that my song pleased her wonder-
ous well because that I spake so much in the
exceeding praise of an old woman.



So along we walked about half a hundred
miles farther, until we met a little old grey
bearded young man, big with child, riding
on an elephant as large as St. Paul's Church.

We asked him what great city that was
which stood alone, with so many towns about
it? He told us, that it was the Pinner of

Wakefield. So we trudged fast thither to rest us, for we were not weary we had travelled so far.

When we came there we went to the sign of the three Knitting Needles, and gave the mistress of the house our horse to set down in the dining room and we went into the stable, and called for half a dozen of wine.



After we were not refreshed, we paid the hostler for the wine, and the tapster for a goose pie which the horse had eat, and away we both walked on horseback to Brentford for it was above half a mile thither.

When we came into the middle of the town, the Mayor and Alderman hearing the Old Woman of Ratchiff Highway was coming, they all come to meet us at the town's end in their buff coats and Spanish pantaloons.

After the Old Woman had saluted some, and courted others of them she asked one of the Mayors how her sister did?



So they told her she had been buried above sixteen summers and seven long winters.

When she heard that she was dead, she would needs go and shed just four tears and a half upon her grave for old acquaintance sake.

But we were no sooner come to the grave, which was upon the top of the steeple but we heard her singing the five and twentieth part of the three hundred and fourth psalm, beginning at the last verse.



The parson's husband's daughter's son who was then sexton would needs persuade us that she was then praying over the twelve commandments, and would by no means suffer me to molest her, or else would have come along with us to London.

When we had thus lost our labour, the Old Woman fired to hasten home to have

her fortune told, for she intended to die soon after her return.

I was in fifty hundred thousand minds whether I had better go to Adam Jack's or Lilly William's, But at the last concluding old Jack Adams to be the best confrologer away I went in a pair of oars and found them sitting on Clerkenwell Green, walking among the trees a little below Hackney.



When I came there I told him That the Old Woman of Ratcliff Highway would have her fortune told. And as he did it well I would give him two custards five pots of ale and thirteen pipes of tobacco to smoke his pipe with. He passed, and so we did.

without meeting with any adventure. But when that he came to Ratcliff Highway again, there had been a very high wind in the month of March, just about Whitsuntide, and which had blown down the Old Woman's cellar, where she lived, and had not left one tile under it, so that she had no place to set her head in.



In this great extremity she was glad to set five and thirty taylors to work to make her a garment of paduaserge and there she lodged for that day. But she took the loss of her cellar so to heart that the next morning at midnight she told me I must needs go to a

cunning man to have my fortune told he immediately fell to work and then told me.

First that she was drowned in Ratchiff Highway. Secondly That she had broke neck with tumbling up a pair of Stairs. and lastly that her cellar was blown up by the roots.



Quoth I, any fool could easily have known this for we knew it already before.— Well, quoth Jack I pray you, what would you have any more? I want to know when she will die?— Why quoth he she will die when she can live no longer. And this is all I, or any controulor of us can tell.

So I gave him what I promised, and I re-

turned to see how the Old Woman did; where I found her just ready to change her new lodging for a grave — She told me she found her heart so whole, that she could not live above three quarters of an hour at least; and therefore she bid me bring her a pot-lid and a piece of charcoal so that she might



set up some legacies, which she intended to give away after her death. So I brought her the fire shovel and tongs, and she began to write as follows:



The Legacies which the "Old Woman of Ratcliff Highway" gave to her friends after her Death.

I Confirm my good kinsman Aminidab Pumpkin to be my executor according to my former will, and to enjoy all my estate except these few legacies

First. I give my grandmother's uncle four spunges and seven water mills, standing in St. Paul's Church-Yard.

Item I give his grandmother's youngest daughter, three Mountebank Stages one upon Tower Hill another in Smithfield Rounds, and another in Covent Garden.

Item I give to the keeper of New Bridewell two stone of rotten hemp, to make him a parcel of hemp cord.

Item I give the Queen of sluts my fillet and hair lace, to hang her up at tyburn.

Item I give to squire Dunn, the hole of my backside to make a whistle of.

Item. I give to Old Nell's Porter all the hair between my great toes to make him a perriwig.

When I heard her so freely dispose of all her estate I told her she would leave nothing for me at the last. And then she remembered herself, and so gave me her writing tools to lay by. and was just going to say something to me when on sudden the new river broke out just at the eel pie house by jack straw's castle. and came with such violence that it swept her away, bed, house and all into the bear garden, in Houndditch. So that now I may justly say that she was drowned at Ratchiff Highway in earnest because I was an ear witness to it: and was at a great coffee-house at padeington, drinking lamb's wool when it was done.

And there I composed this epitaph, to lie
under her stone which concludes this won-
derful relation of the old Woman that was
crowned at Ratcliff Highway a fortnight
ago.

EPITAPH.

UNDER this wooden stone,
She doth remain
Who liv'd and dy'd,
and dy'd and liv'd again.

So many times to die,
'tis strange say you;
But read this book
and then you'll say 'tis true.



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